

HCS HB 470 -- VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Barnes

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 16 to 8.

This substitute allows a Missouri student to enroll in the virtual course or school program of a charter school or school district other than the student's district of residence. The receiving school must admit the student based on the time of application until full capacity is reached, not to exceed 3% of the students enrolled in public schools, including charter schools. Preference will be given to students who are siblings of students already enrolled. Once enrolled, the student may remain in the virtual program until he or she completes the grade levels offered or withdraws. For school funding purposes, the student is included in the average daily attendance of his or her school district of residence. The school of residence must pay the receiving school 72.5% of the previous year's average current expenditure per average daily attendance, not to exceed the aggregate amount due the residence district under the basic school funding formula, which includes the classroom trust fund, and Proposition C funds. Any higher education institution with its main campus located in Missouri with an approved teacher education program may sponsor a virtual charter school. A virtual charter school may only offer instruction in a virtual setting using technology, Intranet, and Internet methods.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill makes it possible for a student to take virtual courses that are not available through his or her district school by allowing a student to enroll in another district's virtual program, while protecting the district of residence from being required to use its local funds. Many states allow this. Virtual courses are helpful for students with special circumstances and those who live in areas where it is hard to provide a teacher in a classroom for just a few students.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Barnes; Susan Stagner, Connections Academy; Kelsey Parrott; Diana Henage, Connections Academy; H. Micahel Brown, Superintendent, Grandview R-II; Roy and Cynthia Ware; K12 Inc.; Lorie Fussner, Connections Academy; Missouri Education Reform Council; Children's Education Council of Missouri.

OPPONENTS: Opponents of the bill say that districts are responsible for paying for the courses but will not have real control over them. A better alternative would be to fully fund the state's virtual school.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri State Teachers Association; Mike Lodewegen, School Administrators Coalition; Missouri National Education Association; Steve Carroll, Special Administrative Board of the St. Louis Public Schools; Cooperating School Districts of Greater St. Louis; Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City; Missouri School Boards Association.